

August 13, 2020

Return To School Safely

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Bay County, Fla. – As in-person learning at schools’ resumes, the Florida Department of Health in Bay County (DOH-Bay) encourages everyone in their households to take steps to stay healthy and protect each other from getting sick. [Practice everyday preventive actions](#), limit [interactions](#) with other people, and stay informed on [COVID-19 updates](#).

Back to School Planning: How to protect your family and loved ones

For many families, back to school [planning](#) will look different this year than it has in previous years. Your school will have new policies in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19. You may also be starting the school year with at-home learning. Whatever the situation, these tips are intended to help parents, guardians and caregivers plan and prepare for the upcoming school year.

- Children should be advised to do the following:
 - [Wash hands](#) frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer comprised of at least 60% alcohol. Make sure you are using a safe product. [FDA provides a list of hand sanitizers consumers should not use](#). Adults should monitor children while they use hand sanitizer.
 - Maintain a recommended physical distance from other people, including other students.
 - Avoid sharing objects with other students, including water bottles, devices, writing instruments and books.
 - Monitor how they feel and tell an adult if they are not feeling well.
- Develop daily routines before and after school—for example, things to pack for school in the morning (like hand sanitizer) and things to do when you return home (like washing hands immediately).
- Be familiar with your school’s plan for how they will communicate with families when a positive case or exposure to someone with COVID-19 is identified and ensure student privacy is upheld.
- Make sure your child is up-to-date with all [recommended vaccines](#), including for flu. All school-aged children should get an influenza flu vaccine every season, with [rare exceptions](#). This is especially important this year because we do not yet know if being sick with COVID-19 at the same time as the flu will result in more severe illness. Call DOH-Bay at (850) 872-4455 to schedule an appointment for immunizations or to receive a copy of your child’s records email baymedicalrecords@FLHealth.gov. Flu vaccinations will be available in the fall and DOH-Bay will provide information when an appointment can be scheduled.

Older adults and people with certain underlying medical conditions are at increased risk for serious illness from COVID-19. If your household includes anyone who is at increased risk, then all family members should exercise the appropriate precautions.

People who live in multi-generational households may find it difficult to take precautions to protect themselves from COVID-19 or isolate those who are sick, especially if space is limited. It is important to understand potential risks and how to adopt different types of prevention measures to protect your family and to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. The CDC has created guidance for [households living in close quarters](#). The information could be useful for all families, including those with both children and older adults in the same home. You can also contact your local health department for guidance.

Masks

Bay District schools are requiring masks when social distancing is not possible.

Have multiple masks, so you can wash them daily and have back-ups ready. Choose masks that:

- Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
- Completely cover the nose and mouth
- Are secured with ties or ear loops
- Include multiple layers of fabric
- Allow for breathing without restriction
- Can be washed and machine dried without damage or change to shape

Practice with your child putting on and taking off cloth face coverings without touching the cloth.

If you have a young child, help build their comfort wearing a mask and become comfortable seeing others in masks.

- Praise your child for wearing a mask correctly.
- Put a mask on stuffed animals.
- Draw a mask on a favorite book character.
- Show images of other children wearing masks.
- Allow your child to choose their mask that meets any dress requirements your school may have.
- Suggestions from the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#)

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